

Now, such phantasies are quite ordinary and common in a milder degree. Even where they are for periods fairly acute, however, the majority of children learn to deal with them successfully, as the sense of reality develops, and if, and in so far as, the real love they have for mother or nurse is not damaged by cruel or clumsy handling. These phantasies become repressed, and the anxieties attaching to them are diffused or deflected in various ways, so that the child presently is able to accept more or less regular habits of cleanliness, on more or less agreed social lines. But if I have succeeded in making these states of mind on the part of the child in the least degree convincing and intelligible to my readers, it will be readily understood that severe treatment, or clumsy nagging of the child, only serve to increase his anxieties and to make his problem more difficult. That this is true descriptively is proved every day in the nursery. I am constantly receiving evidence of it in letters from mothers and nurses, who assure me how they have scolded and whipped and punished and cajoled the child, all to no purpose. The reasons why these methods fail become clear as soon as one gains any inkling of the nature of the child's anxiety. The methods that succeed far more readily and surely are those of quiet encouragement, a relative unconcern at the child's dirtiness, and steady confidence that he will shortly be able to manage things for himself more successfully. That is to say, a method which avoids confirming the child's phantasies that he has done something really very dreadful in being dirty, or that the faeces themselves are really bad and dangerous things, which one ought not to have at all; and which patiently shows him *how* to be clean; in other words, that gives the child *skill* instead

of increasing
his fears.

The practical inconvenience to mother or nurse of failures in cleanliness is real, and need not be minimised. The mother need not pretend that she does not find them a nuisance. But most mothers and nurses do, in fact, go far beyond this in their response to the dirty child. Their own anxieties get the upper hand, and they do really feel that his dirtiness is deliberate malice or wickedness, and that he is *never* going to be clean. Where the mother does not react by such excessive worry and horror of the child, but treats the matter as simply one of real inconvenience, and shows